

**Subject:** News from LADBS

**From:** "Bud Ovrom" <LADBS.Newsletter@lacity.org>

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Also available on the Web at  
[www.ladbs.org](http://www.ladbs.org)

**Special Points of  
Interest**

*For general information and  
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[2010 Performance  
Enhancement Program](#)*

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**Downtown**

201 N. Figueroa Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(Figueroa Plaza)

## Message from the General Manager



**Monthly Statistics**

August continued the slow start to the new Fiscal Year.

Total Building Permit Valuation for August was \$265 million, which was way up compared to July (\$149 million), but still down 2% from last August

at \$271 million.

A mediocre August combined with a really bad July brought our year-to-date total to \$406 million, down 23% from this time last year at \$527 million.

That pattern was even more accentuated when it came to housing starts. In August we saw 722 new units begin construction, which was up 25% over last August at 577 units. But, July was a record breaking low of only 76 units. Hence, our year-to-date total is now at 798, which is down 31% from last year.

The one bright spot is Plan Check Revenue, which is up 31% over this time last year. Plan Check revenue is our best indicator of future construction, so we do have reason to expect better months ahead.

**West Los Angeles**

1828 Sawtelle Blvd.  
2nd Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90025



**South LA**

8475 S. Vermont Ave.  
2nd Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90044

**Van Nuys**

6262 Van Nuys Blvd.  
2nd Floor, Room 251  
Los Angeles, CA 91401

**San Pedro**

638 S. Beacon Street  
Room 276  
San Pedro, CA 90731

**Counter Hours:**

Monday, Tuesday,  
Thursday, Friday: 7:30 am  
- 4:30 pm Wednesday:  
9:00 am - 4:30 pm  
\* San Pedro & South LA  
offices are closed  
between noon - 1:00 pm  
daily

For Information you  
call:  
3-1-1 (Inside LA City)  
or  
(213) 473-3231  
(Outside LA City)

**Development Reform**

Last month's Newsletter was devoted almost entirely to the first implementation action of Mayor Villaraigosa's development reform efforts – the July 12 opening of the Development Services Case Management Office.

Rather than announce a concept, Mayor Villaraigosa insisted that we announce milestone accomplishments only after they are actually implemented. The opening of the Case Management Office is probably the most significant development reform in Los Angeles since the One Stop Constituent Centers were created in the 1980's.



On August 30 Mayor Villaraigosa welcomed (photo above) the new Farmer's Insurance facility in Woodland Hills (CD 3, Zine) as one of the first success stories of the development reform effort. Farmers will be moving over 1,200 employees from outside the County into LA with the help of the expedited permitting for a new parking structure by the

new Case Management Office.

Mayor Villaraigosa used the occasion to announce the signing of Executive Directive No. 21, which institutionalizes the creation of the Development Services Collaborative, and the official public release of the overall "Development Reform Strategic Plan." Both landmark documents are now available on our website at [www.LADBS.org](http://www.LADBS.org).

Development reform is no longer a distant dream and changes are starting to happen. If you think your project could benefit, please contact Lincoln Lee at [Lincoln.Lee@lacity.org](mailto:Lincoln.Lee@lacity.org).

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## Ongoing Investigations and Reforms

### Preventing Future Violations of the Public Trust

In our May 2011 newsletter ([available on our website](#)), we very candidly outlined the violations of the public trust we have confronted in the Department.

To deal with these challenges we said we would be guided by three principles:

#### **1. To aggressively prosecute all alleged violations of the public trust**

So far in 2011 we have terminated four employees for major violations of the public trust. Two of those four were subsequently arrested by the FBI, pled guilty and are awaiting sentencing. One additional employee retired after being placed on administrative leave pending an investigation.

Eight other employees were terminated during the year for unrelated ethical violations and two for performance issues.

The Department is totally committed to setting a high standard for our employees and dealing fairly and decisively with employees who do not meet these standards. If you are aware of any violations, please report them to the City's Fraud and Abuse Hotline at 866-428-1514.

It is important to note that the vast majority of the LADBS employees are honest and hard working. We cannot allow a few bad apples to reflect so negatively on our larger workforce.

#### **2. To be forthright about acknowledging the problems the Department faces**

It is bad enough that violations like this happen. It is even worse when organizations try to sweep it under the rug or go into denial.

In addition to the May and this month's newsletters, we have made three public presentations before various City Council Committees during the last three months. These hearings have given us the opportunity to receive direct input from the community on these issues and how we are handling them. Copies of the full reports submitted to the Council Committees are available on the City Clerk's webpage.

### **3. To swiftly implement preventative measures and procedures to help prevent such violations in the future**

Incidents like these give any organization an opportunity to learn from what happened and to take steps to try to prevent such problems in the future.

At the direction of Mayor Villaraigosa, the Department is rapidly implementing numerous corrective measures, including:

## **Re-establish an Internal Investigations Office**

The Department had such a unit for over 40 years and then disbanded it approximately 10 years ago.

A trained and experienced investigator will now be hired from outside the department to head up this new Internal Investigations Office. Additional "subject matter" experts will be added as needed. This lead 'Special Investigator' will report to the City's Personnel Department to insure independence and objectivity.

The cost of the new office will be borne by the Department's Special Enterprise Fund and not by the City's General Fund. Recruiting for the position is underway now and will be operational in November.

## **Performance Audit**

The Department is currently undertaking its own performance audit of approximately 460 employees, in positions with the greatest potential for abuse.

## **GPS Tracking System**

The Department is analyzing ways to make better use of current technology to better monitor our several hundred employees who are spread out across this very large City.

It appears the most cost effective solution is to issue GPS ready phones to our employees who are assigned throughout the City. We anticipate being able to implement this technology in December.

## Update and Improve Personnel Practices

We are undertaking a number of measures to improve our personnel management. These actions will also be implemented before the end of 2011:

- Review all hiring standards
- Improve employee background investigative practices
- Update all employee evaluations
- Increase employee training
- Enhance supervisory practices
- Implement more financial disclosure
- Mandate regular employee reassignments

Taken collectively, we are confident these measures will make us a better department and help regain the public's trust.

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## New Resource Management Bureau Chief, Mr. Steve Ongele



Our Department would like to welcome Mr. Steve Ongele who began his new role as Chief of the Resource Management Bureau on August 29, 2011.

The Resource Management Bureau is responsible for all administrative, financial, human resources, records retention, information technology, training and emergency management

services department-wide.

With over ten years of exemplary service to the City of Los Angeles, Steve Ongele has an impressive breadth of knowledge of City operations and policies.

He has over five years of direct participation in the City's annual budget formulation and analysis process as well as financial policy creation with an emphasis on revenue, investment and public debt issuance. In addition, he has extensive experience in economic development, in particular as it pertains to redevelopment, and in management, with oversight on budget and personnel.

From 2010 - 2011 Ongele served as the interim City Treasurer. In this role as the Treasurer, Ongele served as the banker, investor, and manager of public funds for the City of Los Angeles. He also oversaw a cash management program that exceeded \$50 billion in annual

transactions and over \$8 billion of investment portfolio.

While managing the City Treasury Ongele also oversaw and coordinated the consolidation of the Office of the Treasurer into the Office of Finance, something that the City had only desired in the last several years but only recently realized under Ongele's leadership.

*General Manager Bud Ovrom noted, "I first offered this important job to Steve in August 2010. However, the Mayor appointed him to be the Interim City Treasurer to assist in a study to merge the Office of the City Treasurer and the Department of Finance. It was challenging for the Department to have to wait over a year for Steve to report to work, but the fact that the Mayor had such great confidence in Steve's abilities further confirmed my belief that we had selected a truly outstanding professional."*

Prior to the Treasury, Mr. Ongele served as Associate Director of the Mayor's Office of Budget and Finance. In this role, he oversaw budget requests, status reports, economic forecasts and revenue projections and made recommendations to the Mayoral budget accordingly.

>From 2003 - 2007, Mr. Ongele served as the City Council Deputy for Budget and Finance for Councilman Bernard C. Parks, chairman of the Council's Budget and Finance Committee. As Council Deputy, he was responsible for reviewing budget reports, proposals and forecasts and making recommendations on proposed debt issues relative to debt management policies, debt service schedules, and marketing of the City's municipal debt instruments. In this capacity Ongele became one of the early architects to the City's Financial Policies and a prominent supporter of LADBS' Enterprise Fund adoption.

Prior to this position, Mr. Ongele served as the City Council Deputy for Economic Development for the Tenth Council District from 2001 – 2003 and as a Business Development Representative under Mayor Richard Riordan from 2000 - 2001.

Prior to City Service, Ongele worked in Washington DC area as a bookstore manager/buyer at the Georgetown University Bookstores before changing his career to real estate brokerage and real estate appraisal in Washington Metropolitan Area.

Ongele has been married to his wife Brenda for 16 years and has three beautiful daughters, Emily, Sofia and Jenny.

Mr. Ongele holds a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration from Southeastern University and a Masters in Business Administration from the University of the District of Columbia.

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## LADBS Industry Training 2011 Los Angeles City Codes

The Department will be hosting a series of **FREE** training classes highlighting the 2010 CBC (California Building Code) changes and Los Angeles City Amendments. These classes will focus on the Building, Residential, Green, Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing Codes.

The training classes will be conducted at 201 N. Figueroa St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor Commission Board Room, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

Please note that LADBS does not validate parking. Metered street parking and paid lots are available nearby.

For reservations, please contact Victor Cuevas at (213) 482-0409 or via e-mail at [victor.cuevas@lacity.org](mailto:victor.cuevas@lacity.org). RSVP is required to attend. No walk-in guests will be allowed.

For more information, please visit [www.LADBS.org](http://www.LADBS.org).

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## Our Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Building and Safety is to protect the lives and safety of the residents and visitors of the City of Los Angeles and enhance the quality of life, housing, economic prosperity, and job creation. This is accomplished through advising, guiding, and assisting customers to achieve compliance with the Building, Zoning, Plumbing, Mechanical, Electrical, Disabled Access, Energy, and Green Codes; and local and State laws, through a timely, ethical, cooperative, and transparent process for the facilitation of construction and maintenance of commercial, industrial, and residential buildings throughout the City.

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If you want to comment on the service(s) you received or file a complaint, please call our Customer Hotline at (213) 482-0056.

**LADBS Newsletter Editors: David Lara & Celeste Morris**

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